

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

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Governor

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GOVERNOR KAINE ANNOUNCES NATIONAL HONOR FOR VIRGINIA'S CHILD SUPPORT PROGRAM

~ CSG Innovation Award recognizes approach to collecting delinquent child support ~

RICHMOND – Governor Timothy M. Kaine today announced that the Virginia Department of Social Services' (VDSS) Division of Child Support Enforcement has received the Council of State Governments' (CSG) Innovation Award for the Southern Region for its innovative Cell Phone Initiative. The initiative works with Virginia's cell phone carriers to obtain billing addresses and cell phone numbers for parents who owe child support.

"Virginia was the first state to initiate administrative subpoenas to cell phone companies requesting addresses and phone numbers for people who are not stepping up to their responsibilities to support their children. This has proven to be a powerful tool for Virginia's Child Support Enforcement Program," Governor Kaine said.

The initiative is working for many of Virginia's 484,000 children who are owed child support. At any one time, Virginia's child support workers are looking for 268,000 delinquent noncustodial parents owing \$2.4 billion in child support. In fiscal year 2007, Virginia collected more than \$608 million in child support, an increase of nearly 4 percent from the previous year.

In 2005, the Division of Child Support Enforcement began working with the Attorney General's office to introduce a groundbreaking method of tracking hard-to-locate offenders and began issuing subpoenas to seven of the largest cell phone providers. In all of these cases, other traditional methods to locate the noncustodial parents, such as working with employers and financial institutions, had been exhausted.

"I applaud our child support professionals for implementing this initiative. This recognition from the CSG focuses well-deserved attention on their commitment to the children of Virginia," said VDSS Commissioner Anthony Conyers Jr.

The Commonwealth is working with other states to automate the matching of names with cell phone company databases. More than a dozen states have started their own cell phone initiative.

The Council of State Governments is a national organization that serves the executive, judicial and legislative branches of state governments through leadership education, research and information services. The annual Innovation Award recognizes programs and initiatives that provide insight into major policy trends for states, commonwealths and territories on a national and regional basis.

VDSS Deputy Commissioner and Director of Virginia's Child Support Enforcement Program, Nick Young, accepted the award on behalf of the Commonwealth during the council's Annual State Trends and Leadership Forum in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

More information about Virginia's Child Support Enforcement program can be found on the VDSS Web site at: <http://childsupport.virginia.gov>

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